



Refugee Council
of Australia

BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

5 May 2010

Welcome to the latest bulletin from the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA). We welcome feedback, ideas or information worth sharing. Please contact us at info@refugeecouncil.org.au.

Paul Power, CEO, Refugee Council of Australia

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NEWS FROM THE REFUGEE COUNCIL

Reopening Curtin detention centre a step backwards for reform

RCOA has strongly criticised government plans to house asylum seekers in Curtin defence facility near Derby WA. The facility, which was shut down in 2002, was notorious for being among the worst of all the onshore detention centres. It attempted to use demountables for long-term accommodation and the remoteness of its location made service delivery to torture and trauma survivors incredibly difficult. RCOA's media release on the reopening of Curtin can be viewed here: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/releases/2010/100418_Curtin.pdf

Halt in refugee processing creates detention concerns

RCOA has raised serious concerns about the Australian Government's decision to suspend the processing of asylum claims made by Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. While recognising the need for the Government to take into account changing security situations in Sri Lanka and Afghanistan and possible reviews by UNHCR of its advice on conditions in-country, and their impact on refugee assessments, RCOA has highlighted the potential impacts of delays in processing on the wellbeing of asylum seekers, particularly those in detention. RCOA has called for careful monitoring of vulnerable groups of asylum seekers to ensure that they receive appropriate services and treatment. Our media release on the suspension policy can be viewed here:

http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/releases/2010/100409_Suspension_of_processing.pdf

Suspension policy attracts international criticism

The recent changes to Australia's asylum policy have attracted international criticism, with members of the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) condemning the Australian Government's decision to suspend the processing of asylum applications from individuals from Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. The joint statement, signed by civil society organisations across Asia-Pacific, asserted that the suspension policy will undermine attempts to encourage regional cooperation on refugee protection by sending "a clear message to our governments that [Australia] does not respect the binding nature of its international human rights obligations towards asylum seekers and refugees." RCOA issued a media release welcoming the APRRN statement as an important international critique of the suspension policy. The APRRN statement can be viewed at: refugeerightsasiapacific.org/category/statements RCOA's response can be viewed at:

http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/releases/2010/100505_RCOA_on_APRRN_statement.pdf

The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, has also expressed disappointment over the suspension policy. A statement issued by UNHCR's regional office in Canberra raised concerns about the negative impact of prolonged detention on asylum seekers and called on the Australian Government to implement protection safeguards on the treatment of asylum seekers whose claims are suspended. The UNHCR statement can be viewed at: http://unhcr.org.au/pdfs/100416_aulpress.pdf

Anti-people smuggling legislation increases risk of harm to vulnerable groups

RCOA has called on the Australian Government to review its proposed anti-people smuggling legislation, recommending that the Bill should not be passed without significant amendment. In a submission to the Senate inquiry into the Bill, RCOA argued that the legislation would increase the risk of harm to vulnerable groups, including asylum seekers. The submission also raised concerns about the potential impact of the legislation on people attempting to escape persecution and dangerous situations and on people in Australia who provide support to relatives facing hardship or persecutory situations overseas. RCOA's submission can be downloaded from:

http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/submissions/1004_Anti-People_Smuggling_Bill.pdf

On 4 May, the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee released its report of the inquiry. Despite the numerous concerns raised by a wide range of organisations about the proposed legislation, the Committee recommended that the Bill be passed with a single minor amendment. Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young released a dissenting report criticising the Committee's findings and recommending that the Bill should not proceed without significant amendments. Both reports can be downloaded from:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/legcon_ctte/antipeoplesmuggling/index.htm

RCOA submission highlights the contributions of refugees from African nations

RCOA has highlighted the invaluable role of former refugees from Africa in promoting relationships between Australia and the countries of Africa. In a submission to an inquiry conducted by the Joint Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, RCOA drew attention to the ways in which Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program may facilitate the development of effective partnerships and exchanges between Australia and African nations. The submission emphasised the contributions of African diaspora communities in Australia in building trade, aid and development relationships, highlighting human rights issues and facilitating cultural exchanges between Australia and African nations. The submission can be downloaded here:

http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/resources/submissions/1004_JSCFADT_RCOA_submission.pdf

Refugee Week 2010: register your event now!

Registrations are now open for RCOA's 2010 Refugee Week national events calendar. All groups, schools, organisations and local government agencies holding events to celebrate Refugee Week are welcome to register their event. To list your event on the calendar, download a registration form from

<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/newsevents/rwevents.html>

New Refugee Week 2010 resources now available

RCOA's 2010 Resource Kit for Refugee Week is now available for download from the Refugee Week website. The kit contains background information on refugee and asylum seeker issues, tips for planning an event, advice on working with people from refugee backgrounds, a directory of teacher resources and a comprehensive list of useful websites, books, films and online games. The 2010 Refugee Week poster is also available for download. Hard copies of the poster can be ordered from both the Sydney and Melbourne RCOA offices, or can be picked up from dispatch points across the country. For further details, visit www.refugeeweek.org.au

Thankyou to our wonderful volunteers and interns!

National Volunteer Week will be celebrated from May 10 to 16. The contributions of volunteers are a vital part of Australia's support for refugees and asylum seekers. All around the country, volunteers devote countless hours to helping refugees settle successfully in Australia, assisting the agencies which work with refugees and asylum seekers and advocating for fair and humane policies towards refugees and asylum seekers. The success of Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program depends heavily on their generous support.

RCOA would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of the volunteers and interns who support our work. As a small organisation with only a handful of paid staff members, the assistance of volunteers and interns is extremely important to us. Volunteers and interns make invaluable contributions to all aspects of our work, including research, event coordination, media, fundraising, IT support and administration. We are very grateful for the time and effort that volunteers devote to assisting our organisation. Special thanks to our former long-term volunteer, Eileen Wahab, who has recently joined the RCOA staff team as our new Projects and Administration Manager.

NEW RESEARCH, STATEMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS

UNHCR discussion paper: Settlement services a vital part of refugee protection

The UNHCR recently released a discussion paper on Australian and New Zealand settlement issues for refugees. The paper provides insight into the settlement experience, and seeks to promote discussion about the vital role of good policy settings and high quality service provision in helping refugees rebuild their lives. The paper can be viewed at <http://www.unhcr.org.au/pdfs/UNHCRdiscussionpaper2010.pdf>.

“People of Australia” report launched

The Australian Multicultural Advisory Council (AMAC), chaired by AFL CEO Andrew Demetriou, launched its report to government, “People of Australia”. The statement on Australia’s diversity is available at: http://www.immi.gov.au/about/stakeholder-engagement/_pdf/people-of-australia.pdf.

FECCA Conference recommendations published

Federation of Ethnic Communities Council (FECCA) conference papers and recommendations are now available. Over 500 people attended the 2009 FECCA Conference on 29 and 30 October 2009 in Shepparton, Victoria. The conference theme Strengthening Multiculturalism and Building Social Inclusion reflected FECCA’s desire to ensure that the important social inclusion agenda includes appropriate reference to Australians from migrant and refugee background. Conference papers and recommendations are now available on <http://www.fecca.org.au/Conference09.cfm>.

Fifth Michigan Colloquium on Challenges in International Refugee Law report released

The Right To Work report from the November 2009 The Fifth Michigan Colloquium on Challenges in International Refugee Law, held at the University of Michigan Law School, is now available. Professor Penelope Mathew (Freilich Foundation , ANU) organized the 5th Michigan colloquium on the right to work for refugees and others seeking protection. The guidelines are intended for use by national policy- and decision-makers, particularly those responsible for designing and implementing national asylum laws and national labor laws. The report is available at <http://students.law.umich.edu/mjil/article-pdfs/v31n2-mathew2.pdf>, with the explanatory note from Professor Mathew at <http://students.law.umich.edu/mjil/article-pdfs/v31n2-mathew.pdf>.

Human Rights Commission publishes “Teaching Human Rights” resources

Teachers and students now have access to a new range of interactive human rights education resources. All resources are free and available at www.humanrights.gov.au/education or the DVD can be ordered by calling publications on 1300 369711 or emailing education@humanrights.gov.au

Launch of the African Leadership Development Program

The Hon. Bronwyn Pike MP launched the African Leadership Development Program in Melbourne on 21 April. SBS has uploaded a podcast on the launch and program, available at <http://www.sbs.com.au/podcasts/Podcasts/world-view/episode/81761/Leading-the-way-for-African-migrants>

COMING EVENTS

Don't forget to register your Refugee Week event on RCOA's 2010 national events calendar! Visit <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/newsevents/rwevents.html>

Thursday 6 May to Friday 7 May - Melbourne

Working in Australia interactive course

Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre is holding an interactive employment course, covering topics such as career and education pathways, finding the job you want, writing an eye-catching resume and Job Services Australia.

Details: 10:00am to 3:00pm; Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, Level 1, 1100 Pascoe Vale Road, Broadmeadows VIC; lunch provided. Call Anas or Peter on (03) 9496 0200 to confirm your attendance.

Thursday 6 May - Australia wide

Broadcast of The 10 Conditions of Love

ABC TV will be broadcasting this Australian-produced documentary about the life and work of Rebiya Kadeer, a Uighur leader who has campaigned for the autonomy of China's Muslim minority.

Details: 9:30pm; ABC1.

Saturday 8 May - Sydney

WILPF 95th birthday celebration

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom is celebrating its 95th birthday with an event at Mosman Art Gallery. The event will include a speech and book signing by Dr Helen Caldicott, author of *If you love this Planet* and Founder and Spokesperson for People for a Nuclear-Free Australia. The event will also include a cultural performance and attendees will share a birthday cake.

Details: 1:00pm-4:00pm; Mosman Art Gallery, cnr Art Gallery Way and Myahgah Road, Mosman NSW (behind Mosman Council Chambers); RSVP essential. Call Stefania Siedlecky on (02) 9960 2952 or email siedleck@iinet.net.au

Saturday 8 May - Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney

Be a lifesaver: protect refugees events

Amnesty International Australia is calling for its supporters to gather together to form a giant human life ring, to show that Australians do care about saving lives and support a humane refugees and asylum seeker policy. The event will also demonstrate opposition to the prolonged detention of men, woman and children on Christmas Island, the discriminatory freeze on processing of Sri Lankan and Afghan asylum applications, the reopening of the Curtin detention centre and fearmongering and political point-scoring by all parties at the expense of asylum seekers.

Details: events will be held in Adelaide (The Human Rights Wall, Barker Gardens, 1:00pm-3:00pm), Brisbane (St Georges Square, 1:00pm-3:00pm), Melbourne (St Kilda Beach, 11:00am-1:00pm) and Sydney (Bondi Beach, 11:00am-1:00pm). For more information and to RSVP, visit www.amnesty.org.au Be sure to wear your brightest yellow and red clothes.

Saturday 8 May - Melbourne

Raaso Music Night

The Raaso Project is a project in the Somali region of Ethiopia which is addressing the urgent health needs of over 300,000 internally displaced Somali people. The project has raised funds to construct a hospital which is in the final stages of development. To raise some urgently needed funds to complete the project, the Raaso Project is holding a three-course fundraising dinner featuring music and dance performances and a presentation by Bob McMullan MP, Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance.

Details: 7:00pm-12:00am; 360 Centre, 360 Main Road, Lower Plenty VIC; tickets \$120 with all profit after cost recovery going directly to the project, tables of up to 10 are available; to book tickets contact Abdalla on 0431 340 136 or (03) 9450 2612 or abdalla.ahmed@bchs.org.au

Saturday 8 May - Adelaide

Jambo Africa variety concert

Please join Jambo Africa performers at a special African variety concert to raise funds for an African women's project. Featured performers include the Magic Waterhole African Theatre, Zulu dancer Mondli Makhoba, the South African Choir, hip hop singer Shedrick Yarkpai and contemporary dancer Lena Tear.

Details: 7.30pm-10:30pm; SA Folk Centre; tickets at the door \$20/\$15, under 12s \$5; food and bar facilities available. For further information contact MRC Arts on (08) 8217 9512.

Tuesday 11 May - Sydney

Pathways to Employment Expo for Refugees & Migrants

The Pathways to Employment Expo aims to equip migrants and refugees with a range of effective strategies to gain a foothold in the job market. Representatives of employer groups, education and training organisations, and specialist agencies and community organisations will help provide answers to these questions through information stalls in the main Expo room. Interpreters in community languages (including languages of recently arrived and emerging communities) will be available.

Details: 10:00am-2:00pm; Cabravale Leisure Centre, cnr Broomfield and Bareena Streets, Cabramatta; for further information about this event contact Simon Emsley or Rosemary Meale, Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre, on (02) 9727 0477.

Tuesday 11 May - Sydney

Seminar on Boycotting Israeli Apartheid: Practical and Ethical Questions

The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies and Sydney Peace Foundation (University of Sydney) invite you to a lunch time seminar by Professor George Bisharat. Professor Bisharat will describe the growing international movement in support of boycotts, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) that seeks to compel Israel to comply with international law, and will argue that BDS represents a non-violent, morally defensible, and effective strategy for positive change. He will address ethical questions surrounding the academic and cultural aspects of the boycott movement, and will argue that there is no justification for exempting academic institutions from the general boycott of Israeli goods and services.

Details: 12:00pm-2:00pm; Room 107, Mackie Building, Arundel Street, University of Sydney Camperdown campus; for more information contact the Sydney Peace Foundation on (02) 9351 4468.

Wednesday 12 May - Canberra

Forum: Escaping Oppression, Seeking Asylum and Refuge

Christians for an Ethical Society (CES) invites you to a forum featuring presentations by Kerry Murphy, Immigration Law specialist and partner with D'Ambra Murphy Lawyers, and Paul Power, CEO of the Refugee Council of Australia. The forum will seek to encourage discussion from the floor.

Details: 7:30pm; \$5 donation requested to cover hall costs; Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, Blackall Street (corner Kings Ave), Barton ACT; for more information contact Heather McLaren on (02) 6291 4537

Wednesday 12 May - Canberra

Free Public Lecture: Where to from here? Australia's role in refugee protection

Australia's handling of the asylum seekers on board the Oceanic Viking and recent 'freeze' on Sri Lankan and Afghan asylum applications has sparked vigorous and ongoing debate. In her inaugural lecture as the Freilich Foundation Professor, Penelope Mathew will take a look at Australia's past and present policies against the backdrop of global refugee movements. She will assess these policies for compliance with accepted international human rights standards, and evaluate their capacity to deal with the problem of forced migration.

Details: 6:00pm-7:00pm; Sir Roland Wilson Building, McCoy Circuit, Australian National University ACT; refreshments will be served after the event; registration required. For more information or to register call (02) 6125 9299 or e-mail Mathewlecture.rsvp@anu.edu.au

Thursday 13 May - Sydney

Forum on skilled workers for the not-for-profit sector

The Break Thru RTO in partnership with Strength to Strength Western Sydney project of Relationships Australia is exploring a unique partnership model to train clients with special needs to provide skilled workers for the not-for-profit sector. Break Thru would like to invite you to a forum to discuss this proposal further, get your feedback on the envisaged model and gauge your interest in offering the work experience placement for students. This project will put a special focus on providing training and work experience for clients from refugee and humanitarian backgrounds.

Details: 9:00am-10:00am; CS Training Room, Break Thru People Solutions, Level 1, 125 Main St, Blacktown, NSW; breakfast will be provided. Please RSVP to suji.upasena@breakthru.org.au by 5th May 2010 for catering purposes. For more information, contact Suji Upasena on (02) 8884 3000.

Thursday 13 May - Sydney

Information session on mental health

Transcultural Mental Health Centre is holding a free information session on mental health issues for refugees and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Details: 10:30am-11:30am; Sydney MCS Meeting Room, 1 General Bridges Crescent, Daceyville NSW; for more information or to confirm your attendance, please contact Damien D'Cruz on (02) 9663 3922 or damiend@sydneymcs.org.au

Thursday 13 May - Sydney

Skilled Diversity Project launch

Managed by the Centre for Volunteering, the Skilled Diversity Project will research the factors that make utilisation of highly skilled culturally diverse volunteers by not-for-profit organisations successful (both for the volunteer and the organisation). The project will be launched by the NSW Volunteering Minister, the Hon Peter Primrose, along with the Deputy Mayor and Councillors of the City of Sydney and attended by leaders of NSW not-for-profit and corporate organisations.

Details: 10:00am-12:00pm; Strangers Function Area, Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW; RSVP by Wednesday 5 May to Tony Frew at tfrew@volunteering.com.au; for more information visit www.volunteering.com.au

Thursday 13 May - Melbourne

Spotlight on Stereotypes: Multicultural Communities and the Media

The Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria is holding afternoon forum on the media and multicultural communities, featuring representatives from academia, the legal profession, the ethnic sector and various segments of the media. TV news anchor Indira Naidoo will be the keynote speaker at the event.

Details: 4:00pm-7:00pm; Village Roadshow Theatre, State Library of Victoria, 328 Swanston Street, Melbourne VIC; seats are strictly limited. To register a booking, please contact ECCV on (03) 9349 4122 or email eccv@eccv.org.au; for further information, please call the Director on 0417 489 226.

Thursday 13 May - Sydney

National Careers and Employment Roadshow

Come along to the National Careers and Employment Roadshow showcasing the latest resources for job seekers, Job Services Providers, Apprenticeship Centres, RTOs, HR professionals, career advisers and parents to find information on pathways to employment and training opportunities within the Community Services and Health industries. All are welcome to attend including people with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job seekers, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and mature aged job seekers.

Details: 5:30pm-7:30pm; Northcott Disability Services, Function Room, 1 Fennel Street, North Parramatta NSW; for more information, please contact Isabel Osuna-Gatty on (02) 9270 6634 or Isabel.osuna-gatty@cshisc.com.au; or Matthew Palmer on (02) 9270 6615 matthew.palmer@cshisc.com.au

Friday 14 May - Sydney

Asylum Seekers Centre quiz night

The Asylum Seekers Centre of NSW is holding a quiz night to help raise funds for their humanitarian work. The event will be hosted by H.G. Nelson and Julian Morrow. The theme for the night is "Swinging 60s" – bring 1960s style to the table and win prizes for the best dressed team!

Details: 7:00pm for a 7.30pm start; \$60.00 recommended minimum donation (tax deductible); North Sydney Leagues Club, 12 Abbott Street, Cammeray NSW; for more information contact Ros 0410 690 246.

Friday 14 May - Melbourne

2010 Human Rights Dinner with Louise Arbour and Rob Hulls

The Human Rights Law Resource Centre and the Public Interest Law Clearing House invite you to the 2010 Human Rights Dinner. Attending the dinner will be Louise Arbour, President and CEO, International Crisis Group and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2004-08); and Rob Hulls, Deputy Premier of Victoria and Attorney-General of Victoria.

Details: 7:00pm-11:45pm; tickets \$120 (\$75 for employees of non-profit and community organisations); Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, 1 Convention Centre Place, South Wharf VIC (Hilton South Wharf entrance, Rooms 210 and 211); RSVP by 3 May using this [booking form](#).

Until Sunday 16 May - Melbourne

The Sound of Jets exhibition

Using photography and environmental recordings, The Sound of Jets by artist Jessie Boylan focuses on conflict and violence in Israel and Palestine. The exhibition attempts to depict landscapes which indirectly display acts of violence, war and trauma that control the every day citizen's mental and physical environment.

Details: gallery hours are 11:00am-5:00pm Wednesday to Saturday, 12:00pm to 5:00pm Sunday; 69 Smith Street Gallery, 69 Smith Street, Fitzroy VIC 3065; for more information call 0424 625 336, e-mail info@69smithstreet.com.au or visit www.69smithstreet.com.au

Sunday 16 May - Sydney

Forum: Women Raising Our Voices

Asian Women at Work Inc and the Network of Immigrant and Refugee Women Australia Inc invite you to attend Women Raising Our Voices, a national forum for migrant women workers in low paid employment. Share experiences with other migrant women, learn new skills and information and speak out together and demand changes

Details: 9:30am-4:30pm; Sydney University, Eastern Avenue Building, City Road, Camperdown; free lunch provided, with halal and vegetarian options; free childcare available; free buses from key locations around Sydney Assistance for some interstate participants available; lucky door prizes. Everything is free but you must register to book your place. For more information and to register contact Lina on 0407 841 010 or Oishee on 0451 456 553, or call (02) 9793 9708 or (02) 9793 9062.

Monday 17 May - Melbourne

PILCH Walk for Justice

Join PILCH (the Public Interest Law Clearing House Victoria) and its patrons at for the third Annual Walk for Justice, which will be led this year by the Honourable Chris Maxwell, President of the Court of Appeal. The 2010 Walk for Justice will mark the commencement of Law Week and will celebrate the pro bono ethic and work of the legal profession, and its commitment to the practice of law in the public interest.

Details: 7:30am; Steps of Parliament to Forecourt of the County Court; \$15.00 for individual walkers and \$130.00 per walking group of 10 individuals; to register visit www.pilch.org.au/walk For more information contact T.J. Riddell on (03) 8636 4411 or tj.riddell@pilch.org.au

Tuesday 18 May - Sydney

Burma 2010 Election and Public Forum

Find out how Burma's 2010 election will further entrench the military dictatorship into power and what impact it will have on human rights. Speakers include Debbie Stothard, ALTSEAN BURMA; Dr John Kaye, Burma activist and Greens NSW MLC; and moderated by Dr Myint Cho, Burma Campaign Australia.

Details: 6.30 - 7.30pm; free entry; Tom Mann Theatre, 136 Chalmer Street, Surry Hills, NSW; for more information contact Zetty on zetty@aucampaignforburma.org

Tuesday 18 May - Sydney

Career Pathways Expo

Auburn Diversity Services Inc in partnership with Centrelink and Auburn City Council invite you to a Career Pathways Expo. Come along to find out information about university, TAFE and training courses, English classes, jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships, working in local government and your rights at work.

Details: 10:00am-3:00pm; Auburn Town Hall (next to the library), 1 Susan Street, Auburn NSW 2144; for more information contact Beatrice Sesay on (02) 9649 6955 or beatrice@auburndiversity.org.au

Wednesday 19 May - Sydney

The Spanish-Speaking Community Network Conference 2010

The Spanish-Speaking Community Network (SSCN) is an open group of workers, community leaders and volunteers committed to strengthening the Spanish-speaking community as well as to support one another. The SSCN conference will be an excellent opportunity to analyse the contribution of the Spanish-speaking communities to the development of NSW and to raise issues that are currently affecting the community and to develop strategies to address them.

Details: 8:30am for a 9:00am start; Burwood RSL, 96 Shaftesbury Road, Burwood NSW; for more information about the conference please contact Carlos Encina on (02) 9724 2220 or manager@nswslasa.com.au, or Laura Sardo on (02) 9833 2416 or 0428 486 145 or laura@nma.org.au

Wednesday 19 May – Sydney

Seminar: A Human Rights Act for Australia

Lawyers from the NSW branch of the Australian Lawyers Alliance will talk about the most recent developments in the campaign to develop Human Rights Act or Charter for Australia. This event is sponsored by Friends of Auburn Library Service.

Details: 8:00pm; Sutchbury Room, Auburn Library, Civic Place, 1 Susan Street, Auburn NSW; light supper will be provided. This is a free event. Bookings are essential for catering purposes. For further information and bookings please call Auburn Library on (02) 9735 1250.

Thursday 20 May - Sydney

Public lecture by Dr Eileen Pittaway

The University of New South Wales invites you to the second lecture in the 2010 series from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences So, what? Public Lectures in contemporary humanities and social sciences. Dr Eileen Pittaway, Director of the University's Centre for Refugee Research, will speak on her recent research relating to refugees - Innocent Victims, Illegal Migrants or Political Pawns? The lecture will be introduced by Richard Towle, The Australasian-Pacific Regional Representative for UNHCR.

Details: Cocktail food and drinks from 6.00pm, lecture from 6.30pm–7.30pm; Leighton Hall, John Niland Scientia Building, UNSW Kensington; RSVP (essential) at www.arts.unsw.edu.au/so-what; for more information call (02) 9385 8512 or email so.what@unsw.edu.au

Friday 21 May - Melbourne

Forum: Working with Refugee/Asylum Seeker Children and Families

This forum will address key issues facing children, adolescents and families from refugee background and discuss approaches to working with these groups. Speakers will include Prof Louise Newman from the Monash University Centre for Developmental Psychiatry and Psychology, Ida Kaplan from the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture and psychologist and family therapist Pamela Rycroft.

Details: 9:30am-3:00pm; Mindful, Building C, 50 Flemington Street, Flemington VIC; \$75.00 (GST free) payable prior to the day by cheque or credit card; morning tea and a light lunch provided. Registration is compulsory. To register or for more information, please contact Mindful on mindful-info@unimelb.edu.au or (03) 9371 0203.

Saturday 22 May - Adelaide

Human Rights Forum: Does Australia need a Human Rights Act?

This free event, supported by the Law Foundation of SA and the University of Adelaide Law School, will present a debate on whether or not Australia needs a Human Rights Act. Speakers will include Julian Burnside AO QC, the Hon Catherine Branson QC, Senator Anne McEwen, the Hon George Brandis SC, Dr Paul Kelly and Prof James Allan. The debate will be moderated by Damien Carrick.

Details: 2:00pm; Elder Hall, the University of Adelaide, North Terrace; please direct all enquiries to Emma Riggs on 0400 518 670 or emma.riggs@gmail.com

Sunday 23 May – Melbourne

RISE Festival

Refugee Survivors and Ex-detainees festival featuring Westridaz hip hop, Gulus Kogoyo Capoeira dance, the Social Studio fashion show, Pataphysics, the Liberian Choir and lots more. Hosted by comedians Amer Rahman and Nazeem Hussain of Fear of a Brown Planet.

Details: 3.00pm-6.00pm; BMW Edge Building, Federation Square; for more details visit www.riserefugee.org

Sunday 23 and Sunday 30 May - Adelaide

ARA film evening

The Australian Refugee Association Inc (ARA) in conjunction with the Adelaide Combined Lodges invites you to a double feature film evening. The features films will be Robin Hood starring Russell Crowe and Cate Blanchett, and Letters to Juliet starring Vanessa Redgrave and Amanda Seyfried.

Details: 6:00pm; tickets \$14.00 (\$7.00 for students); bookings essential; for more information or to make a booking, contact the ARA on (08) 8354 2951 or fundraising@ausref.net, or visit www.ausref.net

Wednesday 26 May - Sydney

Social Justice Careers Fair

Sydney Law School and Sydney University Law Society (SULS) invites you to the inaugural Social Justice Careers Fair. The Fair will provide direct access to law students seeking to pursue a career in social justice. The Fair will be of interest to government, non-government, community and not-for-profit organisations whose work falls within the broad ambit of social justice.

Details: 2:00pm-4:00pm; New Law Building, University of Sydney Camperdown campus, NSW; for more information or to participate as a presenter, e-mail socialjusticecareers@suls.org.au

Until Friday 28 May - Melbourne

Exhibition: Talking Faiths

This exhibition documents a project involving young people exploring interfaith issues through a multicultural perspective. Encompassing students from a range of faith-based and secular Government schools, Talking Faiths features multimedia representations and photographs of the student project and artworks developed by the students as part of their conversations. This exhibition is a part of the Parliament of the World's Religions 2009 cultural program.

Details: Immigration Museum; 400 Flinders St, Melbourne; \$8 adults, concession and children free; open daily 10am to 5pm; for more information phone 131 102 or visit museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum

Saturday 29 May - Sydney

Afro-Latino Festival 2010: Celebrating Our Common Roots

This festival will feature a fashion parade, art and craft expo, soccer championship, African and Latin American cultural performances and a free BBQ. The festival is a combined initiative of the NSW Spanish and Latin American Association, Fairfield Police, Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre, Fairfield High School, The Congolese Community in Australia, Burundian Community Care, City Care and Fairfield City Council. The event is funded by the Community Relations Commission of NSW.

Details: 1:00pm-7:00pm; Fairfield High School, 380 The Horsley Drive, Fairfield NSW.

Saturday 29 May - Hobart

African Cultural Festival

Come and enjoy the tastes, colours and sounds of Africa! Featuring African traditional musics, foods and art.

Details: 11.00am-3.00pm; free; St David's Park, Salamanca Place, Hobart TAS.

Until Sunday 30 May - Australia wide

Human Rights Arts and Film Festival

The Human Rights Arts and Film Festival (HRAFF) aims to make human rights accessible, relevant and significant to the broader Australian community. In 2010, HRAFF will be showing in Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth, bringing you films and artwork from Australia with a focus on human rights.

Details: for further information and festival dates, visit www.hraff.org.au

Monday 31 May to Tuesday 1 June - Melbourne

Communities In Control Conference 2010

Communities in Control is Australia largest community conference, held annually to discuss and learn about the major issues affecting the community sector in Australia. This year's theme is 'Power Up! Who has it, how to get it & how communities can use it'. The conference will be followed by a Post-Conference Skills Day on Wednesday 2 June on sustainable fundraising and marketing in hard times

Details: Moonee Valley Racing Club, Members Gate 1, McPherson Street, Moonee Ponds, Melbourne VIC; for more information or to register your attendance, visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/cic2010

Monday 7 June to Wednesday 9 June - Melbourne

Diversity In Health 2010 Conference

The Centre for Culture, Ethnicity & Health is proud to present the Diversity in Health 2010 Conference in Melbourne. Diversity in Health 2010 will feature three major themes: cultural integrity in service delivery, the right to health and modern multiculturalism. The conference will also feature several minor

themes, representing key issues in diversity and health: aged care, cultural rights, culture, health and sexuality, language services, mental health, problem gambling and refugee health and wellbeing.

Details: for more information phone 9342 9700, e-mail enquiries@ceh.org.au or visit www.diversityinhealth.com.au

Saturday 19 June – Melbourne

Fitzroy Learning Network Ball

Please join the Fitzroy Learning Network for this year's Fitzroy Ball, with the theme Fitzroyalty, to benefit the Refugee Support Program. There will be a delicious 3 course meal from Original Foods, the sustainable catering company of Fitzroy, a selection of fine wines from Yarra Burns and beers from Little Creatures. Entertainment includes Beatrice & Supena with Tristan S. Pierce, performers from West Side Circus, the Congolese band and DJ Whisky Houston. An exciting loud and silent auction with great prizes will also be a part of the night.

Details: \$130 for 3-course meal; Fitzroy Townhall, 201 Napier Street, Fitzroy; for more details, call (03) 9417 2897 or email admin@fitzroylearningnetwork.org.au

Wednesday 23 June - Melbourne

Building on Diversity conference

The Building on Diversity conference, hosted by Australian Polish Community Services, aims to bring together ethno-specific and multicultural organisations, relevant government departments and other stakeholders to showcase positive practices, strategies and collaborations in the provision of culturally and linguistically responsive services. The conference also aims to share practical tools, experiences and expertise that may help to enhance the development of other services, particularly for smaller and less resourced groups who are finding it difficult to meet the new and emerging needs of their communities. This Conference promises an interesting and diverse program, with great speakers and concurrent theme workshops from a wide group of presenters in the following areas, including Service Delivery, Capacity Building, Partnership & Collaboration and Leadership & Sustainability.

Details: Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre, Cnr Bell Street and Georges Road, Preston VIC 3072; fee structure is tailored to ability to pay; for more information contact Melissa Afentoulis on (03) 8371 2306 (Mon-Wed), email melissa@apcs.org.au or visit www.apcs.org.au/buildingondiversityconference

Saturday 27 June - Melbourne

Croatian Festival

Join the Victorian Croatian community for a celebration of Croatian customs and traditions at this one day festival. Experience Croatian music and dance performances, a fashion parade, film screenings and taste the exciting flavours of Croatian cuisine.

Details: 11:00am–4:00pm; Immigration Museum, 400 Flinders Street, Melbourne VIC; for more information call 13 11 02 or visit museumvictoria.com.au/immigration_museum

Until Friday 2 July - Perth

Free multicultural tennis clinics

Free tennis clinics will be held for 6-18 year olds on Fridays from April to July. Come along and be taught how to play tennis in a practical and friendly environment. Places are limited so registration for the full term is essential.

Details: Fridays 4:00pm-6:00pm; Herb Graham Recreation Centre, 27 Chesterfield Road, Mirrabooka WA (outdoor and indoor courts available for wet weather); for more information or to register, contact Natalie Garnsworthy, Special Projects Officer, on (08) 9440 6062.

OPPORTUNITIES

New Interpreters project

The National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd (NAATI) has announced it is now accepting registrations for the New Interpreters Project to be delivered in Melbourne. The project aims to increase the number of NAATI interpreters in both metropolitan and selected regional areas around Australia, with a focus on new/emerging languages, rarer languages and languages for which there are shortages in rural and regional areas. For more information, call (03) 9642 3301 or visit <http://www.naati.com.au/tw-nip.html>.

Community programs on resettlement sought for International web-resource

The United Nations agency, Alliance of Civilizations, is compiling good migrant and refugee resettlement programs and projects from around the world for a new web-based resource. Submissions are sought to be posted on their online community website. The Online Community will be launched at the third Global Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, on 28 May in Rio de Janeiro. For more details, visit <http://www.unaoc.org/forms/migration-integration-forms/>.

ESL courses at Swinburne University

Enrolments are now open for English as a Second Language (ESL) courses at the Centre for Cultural and Linguistic Diversity at Swinburne University, catering for migrants and refugees living in the Eastern and Central areas of Melbourne. Courses range from beginner level to advanced level accredited courses with a focus in the lower levels on English for settlement whilst at the upper levels emphasis is on preparation for employment or participation in training or study. For more information, call the Croydon office on (03) 9726 1618 or visit www.swin.edu.au. Deadline for enrolments is 4 June 2010.

Translation and Interpreting Professional Development & Internship Program

Monash University is offering new professional practice modules for interpreters and translators from 2010, including specialised legal and health modules. Applications for the June/July program are currently open. VITS LanguageLink is sponsoring a limited number of bursaries for legal interpreting modules. For more information email: Translation.Studies.Enquiries@arts.monash.edu.au or visit www.arts.monash.edu.au/translation-interpreting/prof-development.php. Applications must be received no later than 14 May 2010.

2010 Kit Denton Fellowship: call for entries

Presented by the Australian Writers' Foundation (AWF), the \$30,000 Kit Denton Fellowship rewards writers who have shown courage in their work and demonstrated a willingness to challenge the status quo with their writing. Entries close 5:00pm Friday 7 May. For more information on the fellowship and how to enter go to www.awg.com.au

Community Relations Commission 2011 Community Development Grants Program

Applications are now open for the NSW Community Relations Commission's 2011 Community Development Grants Program. Funding is available in three categories: General Grants (closing 28 May), Local Partnerships (closing 28 May) and Sponsorship (closing 14 May). For more information on the program and to download expression of interest and application forms, visit www.crc.nsw.gov.au/grants

Cairo Refugee Film Festival - call for films

The Cairo Refugee Film Festival (CRFF) is calling for films to be screened in June 2010 in Cairo, Egypt. The 2010 Festival aims at providing the Cairene audience with a critical yet hopeful look at the lives of refugees around the world. The deadline for submission is 20 May. For general inquiries, please e-mail cairorefugeefilmfest@gmail.com

Carole Park Multicultural Come Together Festival - call for stalls and performers

The annual Carole Park Multicultural Come Together Festival in Brisbane will be held on Saturday June 19 2010. Elorac Place Community Centre is currently calling for stalls and performers to take part in the festival. They are looking for dance troupes, acrobats, choirs, bands, music groups and other performers, as well as displays of art and craft, "have a go" activities and information stall. For more information or to express your interest or to book a stall, please call Elorac Place on (07) 3271 3592 on Wednesdays and Fridays and talk to Kris or email on k_parkinson@live.com

Join the Edmund Rice Centre Lions

The Edmund Rice Centre Lions are an AFL team of 13-18 year olds. Training sessions will be at Herb Graham Recreation Centre, Chesterfield Road, Mirrabooka WA on Mondays and Wednesdays at 4:30 pm. If you would like more details on joining the team please call Lwal Amoly at Herb Graham Recreation Centre Reception on (08) 9344 5200 or call Joe Moniodis at the Edmund Rice Centre on (08) 9440 0625.

Nominations open for the International Hrant Dink Award

The Hrant Dink Foundation presents this award to individuals, organisations or groups that work for a free and just world free from discrimination, racism and violence, who take personal risks for achieving those ideals, who break the stereotypes and use the language of peace and by doing so give inspiration and hope to others. Nominations close on 15 May 2010. To find out more about the awards or to make a nomination, visit www.hrantdinkaward.org

PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival - call for entries

PLURAL+ is a youth video festival on migration, diversity and social inclusion, organised by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). PLURAL+ invites young media makers up to 25 years of age to submit dynamic and forward-thinking videos focusing on these issues. The deadline for entries is Wednesday 30 June, 2010. For more information, visit www.unaoc.org/pluralplus

REFUGEE ISSUES IN THE MEDIA

A busy person's digest of some recent media coverage of refugee issues:

(Inclusion in this summary does not imply that RCOA agrees with the article's content or vouches for its accuracy)

Boat arrival statistics

Possibly the best graphic representation of boat arrival statistics you will ever see.

<http://blogs.crikey.com.au/pollytics/2010/03/11/perspective/>

Refugee children excluded in schoolyard

The exclusion and isolation of refugee children in Australia begins when they start school, a study of South Australian primary schools has found. University of Adelaide researchers said, while the Education Department's New Arrivals Program was "very good", the study of a Hills school and an Adelaide school showed the widespread exclusion of refugees and migrants from mainstream playing groups and isolation at the edge of play areas like ovals. (Adelaide Advertiser, April 3)

Refugee smuggle charge

An Afghan refugee who worked as an interpreter at the Christmas Island detention centre has been charged with helping to smuggle asylum seekers from Indonesia to Australia. He was charged with helping five or more non citizens enter Australia between May 22 and November 26 last year while in Indonesia. (Sunday Times, April 4)

Iraqi asylum seekers on hunger strike

About 10 Iraqi detainees were pledging yesterday to maintain a hunger strike until death, in the latest eruption from distressed asylum seekers at the Christmas Island detention facilities. The incident comes a day after a larger group of more than 20 asylum seekers pledged a hunger strike. The banners of the hunger-strikers indicated the group was distressed about the possibility of being returned to Iraq. (Sydney Morning Herald, April 5)

65 Christmas Island detainees moved to mainland

Another 65 people have been moved from Christmas Island to the Australian mainland. A DIAC spokesman says 34 of them are at a detention centre in Sydney after the department determined they were "not owed Australia's protection". They are entitled to an independent review of their case before being deported. 11 suspected people-smuggling crew members have been sent to a detention centre in Darwin, where they will be interviewed by Federal Police to determine if they will face charges. Another 20 people, classified as vulnerable, have been sent to Brisbane and Melbourne while their processing continues. ([ABC News Online](http://www.abc.net.au/news), April 6)

Priest slams overcrowding on Christmas Island

THE detention centre priest flown to Christmas Island by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship has slammed conditions at the facility, saying overcrowding is devastating asylum-seekers, locals and the island's crumbling infrastructure. Yesterday, Father Jim Carty completed a three-month stint as pastor of Christmas Island. Since January, he has visited detainees inside the compound daily. He said he wanted Australians to know that the vast majority of detainees he saw had suffered enormous loss and had risked everything. ([The Australian](http://www.theaustralian.com.au), April 7)

Six-month asylum stand-off to end 'In five days'

The six-month impasse between Indonesian authorities and a group of about 240 asylum seekers at Merak who refused to leave their boat in the port of Merak appears to be ending, after the Sri Lankans were told they would have to move to accommodation "near Singapore". Indonesia said the Tamils had agreed to disembark in five days' time, while the asylum seekers said authorities had agreed to give them five more days on the boat to think about their position. The island of Gadang, where the United Nations ran a huge refugee centre during the Vietnamese boat people crisis in the 1970s, is believed to be their likely destination. However, the Australian-funded detention centre at Tanjung Pinang on Bintan Island is also close to Singapore. ([Sydney Morning Herald](#), April 8)

Australia freezes Sri Lankan and Afghan asylum-seeker visa bids

The Australian Government has immediately suspended visa applications by asylum seekers from Sri Lanka and Afghanistan for three months and six months respectively. Immigration Minister Senator Evans said evolving information from Afghanistan and Sri Lanka was likely to have a significant effect on the outcome of assessments. The government would continue processing claims from those already on Christmas Island or on the way there. The announcement comes as Border Protection Command was forced to rescue 70 people, some who jumped into the sea, from a boat foundering near Christmas Island. The passengers were rescued after the vessel issued a distress call yesterday, saying its engine had failed. ([The Age](#), April 9)

Indonesia backs refugee freeze

The Indonesian Government has welcomed the Australian Government's freeze on processing Afghan and Sri Lankan asylum seekers, saying it hopes this will stem the flow of people through its territory on their way to Australia. Indonesia was concerned the policy announcement could jeopardise a tentative agreement with more than 200 Sri Lankan asylum seekers to leave their boat at Merak after a standoff that had lasted six months. The Australian Government was funding the transportation of the Merak asylum seekers to a location yet to be disclosed, although those on the boat were told it was near Singapore. ([The Age](#), April 12)

Ministers contradicted on asylum applications freeze

Rudd Government ministers have wrongly claimed "a number of countries" have suspended visa applications from Sri Lankan refugees to justify Australia's unilateral decision to halt processing of Tamil and Afghan asylum-seekers. Last night, UNHCR regional head Richard Towle said he thought that by suspending asylum claims from Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, the Rudd government stood alone in the developed world. One prominent Afghanistan expert, the Australian National University's William Maley (also RCOA Vice President), described the government's decision to suspend Afghan asylum claims on the grounds that the situation was evolving as "loopy". "If anything, the consensus among experts on Afghanistan is that the security environment has been deteriorating," Professor Maley said. ([The Australian](#), April 12)

The asylum freeze and International law

Like the previous government's asylum processing freezes, it's likely that last week's decision is based on an overly optimistic assessment of conditions in source countries, writes Savitri Taylor, and breaches Australia's international obligations ([Inside Story](#), 14 April)

Take politics out of border protection – Opinion by Malcolm Fraser

The current debate demeans Australia and diminishes every one of us. Once race or religion emerge as political issues it is very hard to get back to a saner and quieter debate. The only way out of this dilemma for Australia is for border protection to be taken off the political agenda, for the political parties quietly and sensibly to establish a bipartisan, legal and humane policy that both major parties are prepared to support - otherwise Australia will move backwards into a darker age. ([The Age](#), April 15)

Boat people won't get permanent residency under Coalition, says Abbott

Tony Abbott has vowed asylum seekers arriving in Australian waters by boat will be barred from becoming permanent residents, if he is elected. "You will not get permanent residency if you turn up this way, no ifs, no buts, you just won't get permanent residency, full stop, end of story," he told Macquarie Radio Network. Labor abolished temporary protection visas in August 2008. But last week, the

Government announced Sri Lankan asylum seekers would have their claims suspended for three months, while people from Afghanistan would have to wait six months. ([Daily Telegraph](#), April 15)

Reports throw doubt on tough refugee stance

Australian Government claims of improved security and human rights in Afghanistan, used to justify its decision to suspend processing asylum claims, are undermined by latest reports from international agencies which warn conditions in the war-torn country are likely to deteriorate, with more people fleeing their homes to escape military offensives against the Taliban. At the same time, the number of refugees returning to Afghanistan has dropped to the lowest level since the fall of the Taliban regime nine years ago. A spokesperson for Foreign Minister Stephen Smith did not respond when asked which parts of Afghanistan now enjoyed "durable" security. ([The Age](#), April 18)

Refugee Council criticises decision to reopen Curtin detention centre

THE Australian Government will reopen a mothballed immigration detention centre in remote north-western Australia. The Curtin air force base would be used to hold asylum seekers affected by the government's decision to suspend processing claims by newly arrived Sri Lankans and Afghans for three and six months respectively. The base is about 40 kilometres south-west of Derby in Western Australia and was closed as a detention centre by the Howard government in 2005 after a riot. RCOA chief executive Paul Power said it was one of the most remote places in Australia and had been notorious in the past for being one of the worst onshore detention centres. "This population of asylum seekers will include torture and trauma survivors and services for them will be nigh on impossible to deliver," Mr Power said. "There is next to nothing there. Why on earth would you choose to reopen Curtin as an immigration detention centre when there are more credible, humane and effective approaches which could be adopted?" ([Sydney Morning Herald](#), April 19)

Refugee Council argues against Curtin on ABC AM

The Federal Government's decision to reopen the Curtin Detention Centre in Western Australia has been heavily criticised by refugee support groups. The decision has angered the Refugee Council of Australia. "It is a very odd policy choice if what you are seeking is a good policy outcome," spokeswoman Kate Gauthier said. "It almost appears punitive - a punitive location and decision - it is very difficult to make any other assumption as to why you would choose such a location." Ms Gauthier says Curtin is not only too far from the capital cities, but it is also too costly and inhumane. "If these people are coming from Sri Lanka and Afghanistan you can be absolutely sure some of them are torture and trauma survivors who've faced horrific experiences," she said. "They need to be given good services and very humane accommodation while they wait for this unfortunate halt in the processing of their protection visa claims." The Federal Government says Curtin will have room for up to 300 detainees initially and should be open within weeks. ([ABC Online](#), April 20)

'Viking' Tamil to challenge ASIO's security threat ban

A legal challenge is being prepared on behalf of one of four Tamils from the Oceanic Viking standoff whose special deal with the Rudd government was blocked by ASIO on the grounds they were all a threat to national security. Lawyer David Manne, who in 2007 secured visas for eight Burmese Rohingya asylum-seekers who could not obtain security clearances, agreed this month to take on one Tamil man's case. ([The Australian](#), April 21)

Abbott unveils boat arrival billboard

Tony Abbott has launched an election-year mobile billboard attacking the Federal Government over border protection. The board keeps a running tally of boat arrivals of asylum seekers. Public opinion polls point to border control as a winner for Mr Abbott: support is swinging to the Coalition on the question of who is best to manage the influx of asylum seekers. (AAP in [Herald Sun](#), 21 April)

Legal challenge to 'unfair' processing regime

The Rudd government's regime for processing asylum seekers on Christmas Island and deporting those deemed not to be refugees without recourse to Australian courts is facing its first legal challenge. Lawyers acting for eight Sri Lankan asylum seekers facing imminent return will challenge the validity of decisions denying them refugee protection, claiming that legal errors were made and procedural fairness was denied. The case could bring into question the entire offshore processing policy, which was

designed to ensure that those processed without recourse to Australian courts are still afforded fairness. ([The Age](#), April 23)

Asylum seekers arrive at Christmas Island

46 Afghan asylum seekers destined for detention at Western Australia's reopened Curtin air base have arrived at Christmas Island this morning. They join 63 other Afghans on the island whose claims for asylum have been frozen for at least six months. Adult males affected by the freeze will go to Curtin in about four weeks, Immigration Minister Chris Evans said. ([The Australian](#), April 24)

Refugee Council opinion piece on education changes

The Herald-Sun published an article about the Victorian schools curriculum encouraging students to seek outside information on cultural diversity issues such as asylum seeking, from organisations such as Amnesty International and A Just Australia.

Paul Power, CEO of the Refugee Council, wrote a short opinion piece in response: "In recent years, we have seen a growing political debate about aspects of refugee policy, unfortunately often fed by politicians more interested in political advantage than in constructive leadership. Young Australians, as part of their growth to adulthood, should be encouraged to analyse important national debates and understand contrasting viewpoints." (see the full text here [Herald Sun](#), April 28)

Lawyers blast people smuggling proposals

Lawyers such as University of Sydney Professor of Public Law, Mary Crock and the president of the Refugee Advice and Casework Service, Ben Saul, say that in largely unscrutinised changes, backed by the Opposition, the Government is introducing new criminal charges for supporting people smugglers, even unwittingly. Proposed laws make criminals of anyone sending money to asylum seekers overseas, who later use it to pay a people smuggler. They also capture Australians who organise for asylum seekers to escape danger for no financial gain, jeopardising some of the work of charitable organisations. The anti-people smuggling and other measures bill also criminalises ship captains who rescue people on the high seas and bring them to Australia and pilots who unknowingly fly foreigners into Australia on false documents. The Tampa captain, Arne Rinnan, would have been jailed if the laws had existed in 2001, the lawyers said. ([The Age](#), April 28)

Christmas Island asylum seekers protest

A group of 25 asylum seekers refused refugee status has staged a protest at the Christmas Island detention facility. And Immigration Minister Chris Evans has forecast more asylum seekers are likely to be refused protection. Many asylum seekers originating from Afghanistan were from the much-persecuted minority Hazara ethnic group. "What we have found is that the situation for Hazaras in Afghanistan is improving," Senator Evans said. ([Sydney Morning Herald](#), April 29)